

Pte Frank Guimond (Service # G18925)

Francois (Frank) Guimond was born April 15, 1919, at St. Louis, Kent Co. NB, the son of Théodore Guimond and Marie Leona Doucet. Wikipedia states that Saint-Louis-de-Kent is the birthplace of the Acadian flag. Frank was one of twelve children. One of his siblings died at birth and two brothers, Alcide and Delore, also served overseas with the Canadian Armed Forces. When Frank was ten years of age, Canada and most of the world entered the Great Depression. Two years later Frank left school and eventually he found work at Harry O'Leary's sawmill in Richibucto. He stayed with the mill for six years. Records state that Frank spoke both French and English fluently and that during this time he trained for a month in Fredericton with the militia.

War broke out in 1939 and two years later on June 18, 1941, Frank enlisted at Richibucto with the Canadian Armed Forces. Basic training was completed at Camp No. 70 at Fredericton followed by advanced training at Camp A14 at Aldershot NS. In December 1941 Frank was shipped overseas to the UK and placed with the Canadian Infantry Reserve Unit (CIRU). In late December 1944, Frank was transferred again to NW Europe and in February 1945 he was placed with the North Shore (NB) Regiment.

The invasion of Germany, Operation Veritable, was launched on Feb. 8, 1945. During the initial phase, the First Canadian Army was responsible for the clearing of the Rhineland, a region of Germany south of the Rhine River. Frank would have fought here in the brutal battles of Keppelen and the Balbergerwald. On March 25th the Canadians crossed the Rhine into the heart of Germany and in early April turned northwest with orders to liberate the Netherlands.

On April 5th, The North Shore (NB) Regiment and the Régiment de la Chaudière were given orders to capture the Dutch town of Zutphen that sits on the east bank of the IJssel River. Zutphen is a fairly large town and the river is partially diverted through a series of canals mainly on the south and the east sides of the city. These created natural defense barriers and all bridges over the canals had been destroyed. There were many young German soldiers here, cornered and fighting with desperation. They were excellent shots with machine guns and rifles and were Nazis to the core. Much of the ground was too soft for tanks and the attack was to proceed with flame-throwing WASPS and troop carriers. In preparation for the attack, the Allied artillery fired 25-pound shells into the town and the entrenched Germans responded with artillery from the west side of the IJssel River.

The assault was launched April 6th, at 6:00 AM, 1200 yards to the east of Zutphen. The Chaudières led the attack with the NSR on both flanks. The excessive resistance prevented B & D Companies from advancing more than 350 yards. A and C Companies now moved closer to the town's eastern edge and relieved the Chaudières.

The following morning, Saturday, April 7th, C Company led the advance and moved waist deep across a canal via a partially submerged bridge that had been destroyed. Sgt Roy Savoy of the carrier platoon was also able to get three carriers, with machine guns and flamethrowers, across the partially submerged bridge and into the core of the town. After a short reconnaissance tour of the site, Sgt Savoy climbed into his carrier and drove full speed into the defended streets while their Browning machine guns fired at almost anything that moved. Upon reaching their target they blasted full flame onto the enemy position. Savoy's team now provided covering fire while Sgt Glendenning and Sgt Howatt repeated the exercise with their own carriers. A and C Companies now moved in and secured positions around the Zutphen warehouses and rail yard for the night.

The next morning, Sunday, April 8th, tanks, and flame-throwing Crocodiles arrived and led an attack northwest across the rail line and into the freight yards. It became apparent, however, that many of the Germans had moved out, although numerous snipers remained. Zutphen had to be cleared house by house and some snipers would fight to their death. By the time darkness fell on Apr. 8th, the town was cleared right through to the IJssel River. Father Hickey wrote, "I buried over twenty men at Zutphen and most had been picked off by German snipers."

The Canadians and the Polish now moved further north liberating the Dutch towns of Heino, Meppel, and Makkum. This was accomplished by April 19th and afterward, they turned east and advanced 140 km into Germany to relieve a Polish Armoured Division near Weener. The War Diary states that at 6 PM on April 23rd, all NSR Companies had achieved their objectives and 103 German prisoners had been taken. While at Weener the NSR also discovered and captured a German slave labour camp that held about 350 prisoners, Polish, Russians, French, and Lithuanians.

Lt M. H. Rogers wrote that on Apr. 24th, A Company proceeded further northeast with troop carriers and a section of the anti-tank platoon. They had been ordered to capture the bridge over the Ems River at Leer. After traveling little more than a mile, one of the troop carriers hit a mine and all on board were casualties. German Self-Propelled 88 mm guns then opened fire and a second carrier took a direct hit with ten casualties. B Company now moved up and responded with anti-tank guns that knocked out one of the German 88s but then ran out of ammunition. A Company radioed for help and at 3:15 PM RAF Typhoon fighter planes arrived and silenced most of the German artillery and struck their ammunition dump. The War Diary reports that afterward there was no enemy fire and the Germans were retreating. C and D Companies now moved up, passed through and took the lead.

The following morning the regiment continued north towards Leer. Mid-morning, however, it became evident that their mission to capture the Leer bridge was a waste of manpower and resources. It had been destroyed a couple of days earlier. Ten NSR soldiers had been killed trying to capture a bridge that did not exist. Information from air surveillance could have been communicated and could have saved lives. On April 26th, the regiment moved back to Moh Lenwarf near Weener and rested for three days.

Records show that Pte Frank Guimond was killed in action on April 24, 1945, during the attack on Leer. He was twenty-six years of age. He was initially buried near the German village of Staple Moor, however, General H.D.G. Crerar, Commanding Officer of the First Canadian Army, ordered that Canadian soldiers were not to be buried in German soil. As a result, Pte Frank Guimond was relocated to the Holten Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands. Plot XI. E. 1. After the war, the Dutch implemented a program using volunteers to maintain the graves of Canadian soldiers. Records show a letter from Mrs. Alberto Fredricks of Deventer, Holland, introducing herself to the Guimond family and stating that she had adopted the grave of Pte Frank Guimond.

For his service to Canada, Pte Frank Guimond was awarded the following medals; the 1939-45 Star, France & Germany Star, Defense Medal, War Medal 1939-45, and CVSM with Clasp.